

The Present Condition of the Negro

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A LITTLE more than a year ago I had the unexpected pleasure of receiving a call in my office from Mr. Hartshorn and his worthy secretary. We were in a sort of personal conference for an hour and a half. As he came out, I went to the door and walked with him part way to the street,



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and we looked over the campus and the buildings, and he said something like this: "The thought comes to me again here that has been coming to me again and again. I am wondering if we have struck just the right method yet or not; if all these institutions in the South which are now equipped and ready for work can but be utilized and made ready for work." So it is that thought especially that I have in mind.

Just a few statistics, and only a few, at the outset, and I give them to you that we may be made to realize at the outside the tremendous possibilities that are before us. It is probably safe to say that there are in the South to-day about forty thousand colored churches, and, of course, about that number of Sunday-schools. Let us go into this just a little. Probably fifty per cent of these churches (I judge it might be somewhat below fifty per cent) have preaching once a month, and in the remainder twice a month. If you go into a Sunday-school you will find very little, up to a certain point, very little that you would change, very little for criticism. There is an opening with prayer or song, followed by song or prayer, as the case may be; the reading of the lesson from the Bible; later, the reading of the lesson record from the various officers.

The Strong Force is the Teacher

Now, just as in the training school the strong force is the professor or teacher, so here the strong force is the teacher. There must, of course, be a good organization. You will find

generally that the superintendent and the leading teachers have been trained; in some of these schools they have been on committees for a number of years. We come to a certain point and there is where we try to teach the lesson, and here is where the old things break down so far as teaching is concerned. We find the lesson leaf read (and I do not want to banish them; I would not banish them), and from this time on it is question and answer, question and answer. There is practically no teaching.

Sympathy with the New Plans

I am very much in sympathy with Mr. Hartshorn's idea that there should be such an organization and method of work, that there should be and we should have an additional teacher or worker in our institutions. Now, I know what the ladies and gentlemen who have been for years in the work in the South are saying. They all say, "Why, we are doing good work in our institutions. We are doing missionary work in all our institutions. We have the Bible and lesson once a week, and that is taught just as everything else is and just as carefully. We have organized Sunday-school work, and perhaps a leading member of the faculty and all of the teachers in our part of the institution get together once a week, or the teachers meet together and some member of the faculty has been selected because of his fitness as a leader of this meeting." He may be the head of the theological department, where there is such a department, and you say this ought to bring about good results. How often we shoot over the heads of those who are our pupils.

The Condition in the Country Sunday-Schools

Now, the fact that the condition is as it is in all of these country Sunday-schools, — for there is where the majority of our students are and where they go, — the fact is that the training has been defective. If not, the result would be different from what it is. I do not mean that I would stop the work. Far from that. I would carry it on and increase it. But I have this idea: that just as we stop ourselves and go to the summer place to refresh ourselves and make ourselves more efficient, so it is that we can have somebody come and have them become a member of our faculty, stop for a month or even longer, and show us what we need to know of the subject; that a line of work can be marked out that will be productive of results and more productive than what we are getting.